

POLICY / COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

JANUARY 4, 2010

Oliver Administration Building

Present

Subcommittee: Diana Campbell, Chair, Denise Arsenault and John Bento

School Committee and Administration: Marjorie McBride, John Saviano, Melinda Thies, Mario Andrade and Mary Almeida

Diana Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:55 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Denise Arsenault motioned to approve the minutes to the November 2, 2009 meeting; John Bento seconded. Denise requested some amendments: P. 1, strike the word “decide” between the second and third paragraphs under

Chemical Health Policy; P.5, third sentence under “School Committee Goals”—should read “John Bento will ask Paul Silva to put this item on the November 9 regular School Committee workshop agenda under Chairperson’s Initiatives.”

The motion to approve as amended passed by a vote of 3 to 0.

Reaffirmation of Equal Opportunity Employment Policy (GBA)

Diana Campbell explained we are required to reaffirm our policy annually.

MOTION: Denise Arsenault motioned to bring this policy before the School Committee to ask for full Committee affirmation. John Bento seconded.

Denise commented that the language of this policy seems outdated with the use of “and women” in item V.3., and asked if the treatment of women as minorities is still an issue in the educational world. Marjorie McBride said this policy was reviewed by the Subcommittee and Attorney Henneous last year and is aligned with Federal regulations and both she and Diana agreed, women as minorities continues to be an issue.

The Committee discussed affirmative action and the monitoring committee. Melinda Thies would like to review the designation of the Director of Administration as the Affirmative Action Officer. The Affirmative Action Monitoring Committee members are designated by title; Marjorie suggested removing titles and insert “Superintendent or designee.” A list of minority suppliers does in fact exist on the State and Federal levels.

The motion to approved passed by a vote of 3 to 0.

Science Curriculum

Diana felt this presentation at the School Committee meeting was cut short because of lateness; she had some questions about the Middle School presentation and asked what is being done to assure more consistency across the teams at Kickemuit. Melinda explained that common assessments have been developed across the three grade levels; by analyzing gaps in student work, areas needing focus are identified. We are working on accountability. Mario Andrade further explained that much of the work with the Dana Center is geared toward the middle school; teachers have been making curriculum adjustments and as a result, students are not performing well; clear objectives must be identified at each grade level; the two areas of concentration are math and science. Learning Walks are extremely effective—a peer group (to promote ownership) visits classrooms to look for trends in classroom environment, level of questioning (are the teachers teaching at grade level), and engagement of students; observations are entered into a hand-held device.

Melinda added this practice was started by Dr. Mara and is continually being refined; it has to do with the secondary school consortium; a cohort of teachers has been trained; the information is immediately uploaded and placed online; the administrator sends an

electronic letter on the outcome of the learning walk; no names are mentioned. Melinda said as a result of the learning walks, dramatic differences in one year's time were witnessed at the high school in terms of instructional strategies, it has become a professional learning community; ownership is key.

John Saviano commented that the middle school's science presentation at the School Committee meeting was disorganized, disappointing and somewhat embarrassing. Melinda agreed that it was not balanced; for years the curriculum has been based around the KITES kits as it has across the East Bay, but this practice must be reviewed. John Bento agreed the middle school presentation was nervous and disorganized with an air of arrogance and both he and Marj agree with the KITES criticism. Melinda assured this is being addressed through the development of common assessments, the partnership with the Dana Center and a partnership with the East Bay region in Race to the Top planning.

Diana brought up the need for a District public relations push; the bio-technology presentation at the Business Partners' Breakfast was astounding—the students are cloning carrots in high school science classes. Our request to Joint Finance for funding should be supported by the amazing things that are happening in our schools. All agreed that this information needs to get out there, perhaps by inviting the public to open houses. John Bento suggested we identify the desired outcome and determine the amount of effort needed to

get it. Denise suggested the marketing students at the high school prepare a You Tube presentation. Diana and Marj said the local cable channels are required to air public service information free of charge. Denise said this would be a good School Committee goal. Melinda said this is one of her personal goals and technology is a good communication tool to a broad audience. John Bento said perhaps 5 to 10 minutes before the School Committee meetings would be a good opportunity. Marj reminded the group that we used to have a one of the schools do a presentation at each of the workshops. John Saviano agreed the science department at the high school is impressive and presentations videotaped at meetings and aired on cable networks would be effective in reaching busy families that cannot attend meetings or open houses.

John Bento mentioned the war college/ navy base is a very big potential target and we could put the PR information on our website; with so many foreclosures, the school system could be a carrot to bring people in. John Saviano suggested a presentation to our local realtors. Melinda thought a personal invitation to Joint Finance members would be prudent. Marj said the School Committee used to meet every other month with two representatives from each Town Council for some informal, informative discussion on where we were, on bussing, explanation of per pupil costs, as well as the state of the budget. Diana said Melinda could do that herself. Melinda will bring it up at Rotary. Mary Almeida suggested having students conduct tours of the schools for interested community members during the

day. Diana said Hopkinton hosted a Ground Hog Day when people were invited to “shadow” a student for a few hours. Melinda said we have to break this down into manageable pieces, first inviting Town Council members. Denise mentioned a Save the Bay representative will be speaking in Marcia King’s class.

Policy Review List

Chemical Health Policy—table for time being

Superintendent’s Continuous Improvement Plan—original plan was for John and Denise to correlate the input from Committee members on Committee goals, give it to Melinda to make adjustments if necessary, then same group review again and then distribute to appropriate members. There is disagreement on the handling of the Superintendent’s goals in relation to School Committee goals. John Bento will ask Paul Silva for a special meeting devoted to goals discussion and to include Melinda.

Denise raised concerns about School Committee communication and conduct as a board and about being a governing body that functions as a governing body; should this be a goal. Denise also requested a review of how we deal with attendance in the District. Diana suggested a review of the policy book to see how it is addressed.

Next Meeting

February 1, 2010; 6:30 PM

Adjournment

MOTION: At 8:16 PM Denise Arsenault motioned to adjourn; John Bento seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

/ca